

HOW CHILDREN USED TO WORK*

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INTRODUCTION

This article assembles some evidence on the changing role of children in the United States—more specifically, their diminishing economic value to their parents—over the past century and a half.¹ In particular, three aspects of this development are elaborated—the increasing conflict between child rearing and other activities of parents, the curtailment of child labor, and the decreased importance of children to parents as a source of old-age financial support. There then follows a discussion of the extent to which this development has contributed to the historical decrease in family size and the unpredictability of future fertility rates. And finally, the main advantages and disadvantages of excluding children from the labor force are examined with an eye to devising a possibly more desirable pattern for the evolution of children's economic role in the future.

I

INCREASING OPPORTUNITY COST OF PARENTS' TIME WITH CHILDREN

Some economists have recently begun to apply economic theory to the allocation of time by households. At a conference in June 1972 on "New

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1. This article does not focus primarily on the "cost" of children, however, nor does it even attempt to describe historical changes in the out-of-pocket costs of children's food, clothing, housing, education, entertainment, transportation, and miscellaneous demands. Such efforts were frustrated by not only the lack of reliable data, but also the lack of any single, straightforward definition of the "cost" of a child. To formulate such a definition, it would be necessary to know how much money is required to keep a family at some constant level of "well-being" when a child is added and as it grows. This, in turn, would depend on the number and ages of siblings already present. Moreover, the impact of each child on various categories of family expenditure would have to be known. If younger children have a larger impact on expenditure for food than on expenditure for housing, for example, then historical change in the cost of a child would be affected by change in the relative prices of food and housing. Peter Lindert has undertaken some promising research along these lines. See note 21 *infra* and accompanying text. But no more extensive discussion of out-of-pocket costs seems to be indicated other than to note that the existing literature on cost of children is deficient for the purposes of this article, and that a satisfactory treatment would be beyond its scope.

Economic Approaches to Fertility," Theodore Schultz observed that "[t]he core of the theory is designed primarily to analyze the effects of the differences in the price of the time of parents that enter directly and indirectly into the production of children. . . ."² This part will survey both the contemporary and the historical evidence relating to the "price," or opportunity cost, of parents' time.

A. Contemporary Evidence

It is well known that women with small children are less likely to hold jobs outside the home. Thus, contemporary data show that women in their late twenties are less likely to participate in the labor force than women in their early twenties or past thirty.³ The dip in this two-peaked age profile clearly reflects maternal time devoted to child rearing.⁴ Men, however, are not kept out of the labor force by child rearing responsibilities—indeed, they seem to work more when there are young children in the family.⁵ Consequently, although "women's liberation" may shift some of the opportunity cost of child rearing to men, until now the necessity of choosing between children and a career has imposed itself almost entirely upon women.⁶

B. Historical Evidence

In the predominantly agricultural nineteenth-century United States, the time cost of children was the value of adults' time—which otherwise would have been spent working in the fields or the house—necessarily devoted to their physical care. But this time cost was relatively lower then because work usually was done in and around the home and on a schedule less rigid than now. As economic production has been removed from the home, however, the trade-off between time at work and time with children has become more critical. Since work has been translated to places where children are not allowed,

2. Schultz, *The Value of Children: An Economic Perspective*, 8 J. POL. ECON. S2, S7, S11 (no. 2, pt. II, 1973).

3. See Blake, *The Changing Status of Women in Developed Countries*, 231 SCIENTIFIC AM. 136, 146 (1974). This latter return to the labor force by large numbers of women who have passed the peak childbearing years is a fairly recent phenomenon; before 1950, the rate of female participation in the labor force rather declined continuously with age after the age of twenty-three years or so. See A. Leibowitz, *Women's Allocation of Time to Market and Non-Market Activities: Differences by Education*, 1972 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Economics, Columbia University).

4. Although better-educated women participate in the labor force more frequently and for longer periods than do those less well educated, both before and after the childbearing years, this is not so around the age of thirty years. See A. Leibowitz, *supra* note 3.

5. See H. Ofek, *Allocation of Goods and Time in a Family Context*, 1972, at 80 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Economics, Columbia University).

6. In view of the continual shortening of the work week, it is conceivable that working women might be able to devote as much time to their children as do nonworking mothers; but a 1968 Syracuse study indicates that even where this is possible, they do not. See A. Leibowitz, *supra* note 3, at ch. VI.

parents have been forced to choose between staying home with their children or going out to work and finding someone else to care for them. Thus, while caring for a child used to entail only momentary interruptions of work, it now entails interruptions of months or even years. Moreover, as industrialization and specialization have enabled the wage earner to command more goods and services than one who tries personally to produce what he needs, the incentive for parents to go out to work has increased. Ironically, they have felt impelled to leave their children or else forego benefits for them.

Historical descriptions suggest that once past infancy, children used to divert very little adult time from work because the children themselves became participants in work at an early age. In agricultural families, children were welcomed as extra hands to till the soil and run the household. "Upon the birth of a son, they exult in the gift of a plowman or a waggoner; and upon the birth of a daughter they rejoice in the addition of another spinster or milkmaid to the family."⁷ Much early childhood training and care, therefore, were embraced in the context of the family enterprise.

Remembering her own childhood in Massachusetts in the years 1806 to 1823, Elizabeth Buffum Chace recalled:⁸

In this house, besides the ordinary housework of those days, various manufactures were carried on: candle making, soap making, butter and cheese making, spinning, weaving, dyeing and of course all the knitting and sewing, the dressmaking and tailoring and probably the shoe making and the millinery of the large household were performed within its limits—and the children, whether native or adopted, began very early to do their share.

Their initial tasks were simple ones, she observed, like gathering oak leaves for baking Indian bread,⁹ but in a short while, children were engaged in more serious work. Thus, she continued:¹⁰

When the oldest boy, Thomas, was six or seven years of age, they used to put a sack of corn across the back of a horse, seat the child firmly in the middle, and send him to the miller, where the horse would stop of its own accord, and the little fellow would cry out: "Somebody come an' take us off!" The miller would take off the child and corn, grind the corn, place the meal in the sack, put it back on the horse, seat Thomas again in the middle, and send him home.

And other contemporary accounts similarly disclosed that by the time children reached the age of fifteen years, they were accepting the full responsibilities of adults in the functioning of the farm.¹¹

7. I A. CALHOUN, *A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY* 203 (1917), *quoting from* B. RUSH, *ACCOUNT OF THE MANNERS OF THE GERMAN INHABITANTS OF PENNSYLVANIA* (1789).

8. *TWO QUAKER SISTERS* 4 (M. Lovell ed. 1937).

9. *Id.* at 18.

10. *Id.* at 17-18.

11. *See, e.g.,* *DIARY OF AN EARLY AMERICAN BOY* (E. Sloane ed. 1962) (the diary of Noah Blake).

Although farms were seldom entirely self-sufficient, home production obviously was more important in those days. One New England farmer wrote:¹²

My farm gave me and my whole family a good living on the produce of it and left me, one year with another, one hundred and fifty silver dollars, for I never spent more than ten dollars a year, which was for salt, nails and the like. Nothing to eat, drink or wear was bought, as my farm produced it all.

And another account described home production by women and girls:¹³

In those days all the stockings were knit by women. Knitting was their evening work, and as only candles were used for lighting it was fortunate that it could be done almost in darkness. The hired girls spun and twisted the yarn in the kitchens.

My mother had such a houseful of little girls, five at that time, that my grandmother Buffum used to keep me with her about half the time; and when there, what I needed of clothing she provided.

Recreation was self-provided as well:¹⁴

The Quaker element among us excluded music. So, instead of singing we recited poetry. It was not uncommon for us to commit long poems to memory, so we never lacked material for this purpose. Instead of dancing, we played Blind Man's Buff, Puss-in-the-Corner and Fox and Geese. We took long walks, jumped rope, and rode horseback.

Another family function in which children participated was the care of the sick, disabled, and aged:¹⁵

One hundred years ago the family was still the "microcosm of the state" and accepted responsibility toward poor and incapacitated members. Well-to-do families had many dependent members, chiefly women, but also old and worthless men; the law could be invoked in order to compel families to look after their own.

Elizabeth Buffum Chace described what was expected in times of illness:¹⁶

In those days there used to be a great deal of what was called typhus fever in this neighborhood every autumn. Elderly women were employed as nurses in obstetric cases, but except for these occasions nursing as a profession was unknown. The women in families took care of their own sick by day and depended on their neighbors for watchers at night. I began to go out "watching" when I was fourteen years old. We girls often went, two of us together, on such service. We had a good supper spread for us to eat in the night, and very sick patients were often left in our unskilful care.

Families also assumed responsibility for the mentally ill and disabled:¹⁷

It was not uncommon for families in this part of the state to take insane persons to board. So far as I remember no harm ever came to anyone from

12. Quoted in Frank, *Social Change and the Family*, 160 ANNALS 94, 95 (1932).

13. TWO QUAKER SISTERS, *supra* note 8, at 16.

14. *Id.* at 26.

15. 2 A. CALHOUN, *supra* note 7, at 331 (1918).

16. TWO QUAKER SISTERS, *supra* note 8, at 37.

17. *Id.* at 36-37.

this practice. The insane boarders whom I can recall all seemed happy as well as harmless, except one man. There was a woman who lived thus in one household for twenty years. We used to see her when we visited there, as she moved freely about the house and sat with the family. She never spoke to us, but waved her hands much of the time and appeared to be talking happily to unseen friends, visions floating about her in the air. The man to whom I have referred, on the contrary seemed always troubled. He acted as if he were struggling with an antagonist and striking at somebody. Rumor said that he had been engaged in the slave trade, and those who saw him believed that he was enacting again some old and dreadful scene upon the slave ship.

Since children's careers were not expected to differ markedly from those of their parents, their education also could be imparted at home. The American pioneer "... looked forward anxiously to the day when the boys should be able to assist him in the fields or fight the Indians, and the girls to help their mothers make and mend."¹⁸ In their *History of Tennessee*, Hale and Merriitt described¹⁹

... a home in the best sense—a domestic center of absolute family order and discipline, rather free from distracting cares [in which farmers] breakfasted with the sun-rise [and] they and their sons, in the day, laid out and superintended work in the fields, and their wives and daughters did the like in the house and the cabinyard.

And one ideal of female education was described as learning to guard their husbands' property, train children, instruct their sons in the principles of liberty and government, and look after servants.²⁰

This sample of observations from primary and secondary sources, thus, strongly suggests that prior to industrialization, child rearing enhanced rather than detracted from adult work and leisure activity. And even in the current century, some fragmentary evidence from studies of time-budgets corroborates the supposition that "having a child reduces the work of farm wives less than it reduces work by urban wives."²¹ Some uneasiness may be felt, of course, about accepting any generalization based on such admittedly sketchy evidence. Indeed, neither the nineteenth nor the twentieth century has had a single, typical, easily described "family," and most of the accounts cited above describe white, Eastern families, of West European origin. But since this kind of family has been a model for others seeking assimilation into American society, at least some general inferences can be drawn about changes in family ideals, however much actual variation there may have been around this norm.

Naturally, these accounts also betray more than a hint of nonobjectivity. It is difficult to find neutral reporting about families of this period, as most

18. 2 A. CALHOUN, *supra* note 7, at 51-52 (1918).

19. *Quoted in id.* at 331.

20. *Id.* at 86.

21. P. Lindert, *The Relative Cost of American Children*, Fall 1974 (rev.), at 29 (discussion paper in economic history, University of Wisconsin at Madison).

of the first-hand descriptions now available were written either by those who were troubled by the uncertainties of changing times and longed for a return to their glorified, harmonious, agrarian childhood, or else by those who welcomed change and described the past as unhealthy, laborious, and deprived. At this point, however, it suffices to recognize that child rearing used to be—but is no longer—an integral part of adult society; that removal of work and other activities from the home has forced parents to make choices between spending time with children and spending time at work or play; and that this new trade-off, or “opportunity cost,” is a fundamental change in the economic relationship between parents and children.

II

DECLINE OF CHILD LABOR

A. Employment in the Home

Removal of work from the home not only created conflict for parents between spending time with children and spending it at work, but also reduced opportunities for children themselves to be economically productive. The most important work of children was the production of goods and services at home for consumption by the family, a contribution that necessarily decreased as households became more dependent on goods and services purchased in the market. Unfortunately, however, this decline in domestic production by children cannot be documented statistically. The Census has recorded only the employment of children in a “gainful occupation,” which is defined as:²²

... an occupation by which the person who pursues it earns money or a money equivalent, or in which he assists in the production of marketable goods. The term “gainful worker” does not include ... children working at home, merely on general household work, on chores, or at odd times on other work.

Thus, only those children working as hired hands or migrant farm laborers or those working regularly on farms cultivated by their families as tenants, sharecroppers, or owners have been recorded as gainfully employed in agriculture; children merely doing chores around the house or garden have been ignored. But since more than half the population of this country lived in rural areas until about 1920,²³ this somewhat arbitrary Census definition has excluded much economically productive domestic work of children.

B. Trends in Gainful Employment of Children

Table I depicts the trend in gainful employment of children from 1870 to 1950, subject to some caveats. These figures are all derived from the de-

22. Quoted in H. FOLKS, CHANGES AND TRENDS IN CHILD LABOR AND ITS CONTROL 9 (1938).

23. See U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, DEP'T OF COMMERCE, SERIES A34-50, HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES 9 (1960).

cennial Census, so—as noted above—there is no reckoning of how many children were “helping out” around the house, farm, or family business. The Census figures also ignore working children younger than ten years of age, newsboys and other children in “street trades,” and children producing things at home on consignment from manufacturers. And finally, these figures are influenced by business cycles in general and by seasonal cycles in agricultural employment in particular. (For example, the 1920 Census was taken in January, a month when agricultural employment approaches its lowest point.)

TABLE I

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN GAINFULLY EMPLOYED,
1870-1950

Year	Thousands of Children Aged 10 through 15 Years Gainfully Employed			Percentage of Children Aged 10 through 15 Years Gainfully Employed		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1870	548	191	739	19	7	13
1880	825	293	1,118	24	9	17
1890	700	320	1,020	17	8	12
1900			1,750			18
1910			1,990			18
1920			1,061			8.5
1930			667			5
1940			209			1
1950			701			2

Source: 1870-80: 11 U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR ANN. REP. 25-26 (1895-96); 1890: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR, COMPENDIUM OF THE ELEVENTH CENSUS pt. 3, at 382 (1890); 1900-05: NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE, CHANGES AND TRENDS IN CHILD LABOR AND ITS CONTROL (1938), and NATIONAL CHILD LABOR AT MID-CENTURY (1950).

Note: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, DEP'T OF COMMERCE, HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES, SERIES D41, gives the following total numbers (in thousands) of children aged 10 through 15 years gainfully employed: 1,504 in 1890; 1,622 in 1910; and 1,417 in 1920. These figures are substantially different from those in Table I, but the overall trend revealed is the same.

The biggest decennial drop in this period in the number and proportion of children aged ten through fifteen years gainfully employed occurred between 1910 and 1920. A report by the United States Children's Bureau illuminates this phenomenon more clearly. The total number fell by 929,367—from nearly two million to slightly more than one million; of these, 785,119—more than 84 per cent—were among those reported as gainfully employed in agriculture; and of these, 625,139—more than 67 per cent of the total decrease—were found in the South Atlantic and South Central states alone.²⁴ In other words, more than two-thirds of the reported reduction in child labor

24. See U.S. CHILDREN'S BUREAU, DEP'T OF LABOR, PUB. NO. 197, CHILD LABOR Table IV, at 20-21 (1930).

between 1910 and 1920 occurred on farms in seventeen southern states. This dramatic change may, of course, primarily be attributable to the January timing of the Census or to other peculiarities of statistical reporting; or it may also reflect migration or other real upheavals possibly associated with World War I, or changing cultural norms regarding child labor that may have persuaded some parents to stop reporting it.

Despite this huge apparent decline in child labor between 1910 and 1920, however, in 1930 more than one-half of all children aged ten through fifteen years gainfully employed were still toiling in southern agriculture.²⁵ Most of these were classified as "unpaid family workers"—which means not that they were doing chores on the family farm, but rather that they were part of a sharecropping or tenant-farming family—and many of them were black.²⁶ Indeed, to this day, the largest class of working children is found in families laboring on other people's farms—southern sharecroppers and tenant farmers or migrant workers in various parts of the country.

C. Nonagricultural Employment

Among the first European settlers in this country, children were expected to work not only in agriculture, but also in nonagricultural production. One historian noted that:²⁷

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Court Records and Province Laws give evidence of the serious attempt made to prevent idleness among children. In 1640, an order of the Great and General Court of Massachusetts required the magistrates of the several towns to see "what course may be taken for teaching the boys and girls [sic] in all towns the spinning of the yarne."

Moreover, traditional enthusiasm for child labor, which in colonial times had made a virtue out of stark necessity, was reinforced at the onset of industrialization by the desire to accumulate profit:²⁸

With the introduction of machinery and the opening up of new and great possibilities for manufacturing industries, the employment of children became more and more profitable and we find that their labor is always counted on as a valuable resource with which to meet the deficiency and high cost of male labor in this country. In the first mills in which machinery was used, children's labor was depended on.

And in 1791, Alexander Hamilton sent his now-famous message to Congress extolling the advantages of manufacturing in Great Britain, observing that

25. See K. LUMPKIN & D. DOUGLAS, *CHILD WORKERS IN AMERICA* 61, 86 (1937).

26. More than one-third of all black children aged ten through fifteen years in Mississippi and one-fourth of those in Alabama were gainfully employed in 1930, as compared to the national average of five per cent. See *id.* at 16, 80.

27. Abbott, *A Study of the Early History of Child Labor in America*, 14 AM. J. SOCIOLOGY 15, 16 (1908).

28. *Id.* at 23.

"[i]t is worthy of particular remark that, in general, women and children are rendered more useful, and the latter more early useful, by manufacturing establishments, than they otherwise would be."²⁹

A report by the United States Commissioner of Labor in 1897—based on the employment data of 94,529 men, women, and children in 1,067 establishments located in thirty states—suggested still other attractions of child labor in mills and factories.³⁰ Asked to state the advantages of women and children versus men as workers, employers responded with such phrases as "cheaper," "more easily procured," "better adapted," "more industrious," "more easily controlled," "more reliable," "careful and rapid," "don't drink," "neater," "more polite," "pleasing and patient," and "less likely to strike."³¹ Presumably for these reasons, employment of children under the age of eighteen years in this sample of establishments had increased at a faster rate than had total employment during the decade period prior to 1895. But even so, no more than 19 per cent of all workers in this sample were under the age of eighteen years—and this during the period in which child labor, as measured by the Census, was approaching its peak. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of children aged ten through fifteen years gainfully employed in manufacturing, mining, services, trade, and transportation declined—although not by nearly as much as the decline in agriculture noted earlier.³² In fact, the 1920 Census showed that children under the age of sixteen years comprised only 2.5 percent of all laborers and semiskilled operatives employed in manufacturing and mechanical industries, although this figure ran as high as 8 per cent in silk mills.³³ Accordingly, it would seem to be a fair guess that children under the age of sixteen years never comprised more than 5 per cent of the nonfarm work force in this country.

D. Contributions of Nonagricultural Child Labor to Family Income

Even though the overall contribution of working children under the age of sixteen years to nonagricultural production may have been small in the aggregate, their wages appear to have been quite important to their families. A survey by the United States Bureau of Labor in 1901 collected some interesting data on the composition of family income. The investigation was limited to the families of wage workers and of persons on salaries not exceeding \$1,200 per year, covering 124,108 individuals in 25,440 families in the principal industrial centers of thirty-three states.³⁴ In the sample as a whole,

29. Quoted in F. ENSIGN, *COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND CHILD LABOR* 32 (1921).

30. See 11 U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR ANN. REP. 11 (1895-96).

31. *Id.* at 583-612.

32. See U.S. CHILDREN'S BUREAU, DEP'T OF LABOR, *supra* note 24, Table IV, at 20-21; notes 22-24 *supra* and accompanying text. There was, however, a slight increase in clerical occupations.

33. U.S. CHILDREN'S BUREAU, DEP'T OF LABOR, *supra* note 24, Table III, at 17.

34. 18 U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR ANN. REP. 15 (1903).

fewer than 10 per cent of the 16,363 children aged ten through fifteen years were reported at work; 85 per cent were reported at school; and about one per cent were reported both at work and at school.³⁵ Children older than the age of fifteen years, however, were usually reported as working: 69 per cent of the 8,486 children aged sixteen through twenty years were reported at work; only 14 per cent were reported at school; and fewer than one per cent were reported both at work and at school.³⁶ The wages of working children amounted to only 9.5 per cent of total family income for the sample as a whole, and most families in the sample had no income at all from children.³⁷ In the 22 per cent of the families that did report earnings from children (most of it, presumably, from children over the age of fifteen years), however, the average amount was \$321—more than one-half the average earnings of husbands in the 96 per cent of all of those families that reported income from husbands.³⁸

Similarly, a subsequent survey, one conducted by the United States Department of Labor in 1918, found that the wages of working children amounted to only 5.9 per cent of total income for the 12,096 families in the sample.³⁹ But the proportion rose to 15 per cent in the \$2,100-to-\$2,500-family-income bracket, and to 31 per cent in the top family-income bracket of \$2,500-or-more.⁴⁰ Contrary to the widespread perception that children's earnings were important mainly to families that were otherwise destitute, these figures seem to suggest that some parents with relatively high earnings of their own were willing to take money from working children living at home.

These surveys indicate that by 1900, most urban children between the ages of ten and fifteen years were in school, but that at the age of sixteen years, they typically went to work and began substantially to augment total family income. Evidently urban parents could expect their children to make a significant economic contribution to the family for at least a few years between the time they finished school and the time they started their own households; and, as later will be seen, in the pre-Social Security era, this contribution often continued after they left home.⁴¹

E. The Exclusion of Children From the Labor Force

From the beginning of industrialization, there were some philanthropists and reformers who recognized that factory labor could be unhealthy for chil-

35. *Id.*

36. *Id.* at 34, 249.

37. *Id.*

38. *Id.* at 63, 362. Wife's earnings are less than 1.5 per cent of total family income in this sample. *See id.* at 362.

39. U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, DEP'T OF LABOR, BULL. NO. 357, COST OF LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES 4 (1924).

40. *Id.* at 362, 366.

41. *See text at pp. 104-05 infra.*

dren.⁴² To these voices were joined in the early 1800's those of labor unions, which represented working men who did not want to compete for jobs against docile young children, and which also objected to the practice of requiring fathers to bring their children to work as a condition of their own employment.⁴³

In opposing the entrance of children into the nonagricultural labor force, labor unions were seeking not only to protect children, but also to protect the economic authority of fathers, which was being threatened by industrialization. Although a man had historically been manager of the family economic enterprise, he found himself being compelled to compete with children for his job as work was removed from the home to the factory. Furthermore, if wages were low, earnings from the job might not support his family. Therefore, when organizations of working men sought laws to limit child labor directly, they were seeking to preserve the dominant role of adult males.

Unions have also succeeded in curtailing child labor through the less direct but equally effective means of minimum wage laws. Paul Douglas documented the application of a paternal wage principle in a number of labor settlements around 1920, and described the consensus in favor of this principle:⁴⁴

Workers, budgetary students, and social workers have all been virtually united in declaring that each adult male should receive enough to maintain a family of five. This type of family, consisting of father, mother, and three children, commonly considered as under fourteen, has been urged as the standard by which wages should be set. . . . The suggestion that such a family might properly derive a portion of its income from other sources than the wages of the husband and that therefore his earnings need not be equal to the cost of maintaining the family as a whole has been quite firmly rejected both by workers themselves and by experts. The mother of such a family, it is argued, will have more than enough to do at home taking care of her three children, and cannot be expected to work outside the home for wages. . . . It is therefore urged that if the family life and the welfare of the children are to be preserved, the wage that the father receives must of itself be sufficient to maintain them.

Appeals to concern for the welfare of dependent children thus had buttressed union demands for minimum wage laws, which, in turn, had reduced the number of available jobs, especially for unskilled labor. Since children are relatively unskilled, minimum wages tended—and still do tend—to make them more dependent on fathers' income.

Undoubtedly there are additional reasons why children were excluded from nonagricultural work. Increasingly complicated technology required

42. See the tribute to David Humphreys in F. ENSIGN, *supra* note 29, at 34.

43. See 2 CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN AMERICA 640 (R. Bremner ed. 1971). See also 3 A. CALHOUN, *supra* note 7, at 67-71 (1919).

44. P. DOUGLAS, *WAGES AND THE FAMILY* 4 (1925). The chief purpose of this book was to discredit the paternal wage principle, on the ground that most adult workers had fewer than four dependents, and to spell out an alternative proposal for a system of children's allowances, to be administered by associations of employers and labor unions.

that workers receive more training—although it is not obvious why this could not have been accomplished in the workplace rather than at school. Perhaps as incomes rose during the nineteenth century, more and more parents began to feel they could afford to let their children stay in school rather than work. Maybe the tirades of reformers helped persuade parents that factory work was more harmful to children than farm work. In any event, these and other forces contributed to the enactment and eventual enforcement of compulsory-school-attendance, minimum-wage, and child-labor laws.

Now that these legal and political battles have receded into history, the question of children's work has been reopened for scholarly examination. A recent sample survey in Boston has found that about 73 per cent of boys between grades four and eight have at some time done paid work for strangers—not any full-time, regular job (which would be prohibited), but marginal work like shining shoes, golf-caddying, delivering newspapers, and shoveling snow. Although the psychologists who conducted the survey suggest that this activity may actually have been healthy for these boys,⁴⁵ their earnings from these odd, after-school jobs were nonetheless miniscule, as compared to earlier times, when, as Peter Lindert has noted, minor children contributed more to the family economy than they detracted from the output of parents and older siblings.⁴⁶ Today, the opportunity cost of the average parents' time spent in child rearing far outweighs whatever small economic contributions the children are allowed to make. And whether this is the best arrangement for children or for anyone else is at least questionable.⁴⁷

III

CHILDREN AS A MEANS OF SAVING:

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ADULT CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS

Removal of economic production from the home has reduced the economic value of children to parents not only when the children are young, but also when the children are grown and the parents are old. In preindustrial times, when the family was an economic enterprise in which two or three generations shared both the work and its fruits, each member could play a productive role from early childhood to old age. Mutual economic exchange took place over the whole life span, so that if infants took from their parents more than they gave in return, they could reciprocate as they grew into adults and their parents lost strength. Moreover, filial sentiment, guilt, or gratitude were not the only motives for aiding the aged; before the era of rapid technological change, the experience and skills acquired over the lifetime of its

45. See Engel, Marsden, & Pollack, *Child Work and Social Class*, 34 *PSYCHIATRY* 140-55 (1971).

46. See P. Lindert, *supra* note 21, at 31.

47. See text at pp. 114-17 *infra*.

older members contributed valuably in planning and managing the economic activities of a family. Furthermore, the oldest generation retained ownership of the land, buildings, livestock, and implements of production. For these reasons, therefore, aging parents could count on support from their children. Raising children was a means—and, prior to development of reliable banks and financial institutions, probably the best means—of providing for one's old age.

But industrialization and the spread of markets for labor created incentives for individuals to leave the family enterprise and seek their fortunes as wage-earners. Just as the removal of work from home created an opportunity cost for parents' time with children, it also posed a new conflict between working for the collective family enterprise and working for oneself. As Alvin Schorr has succinctly stated: "Income was family income, chiefly in subsistence items, which had been shared and continued to be shared. The spread of individually earned cash income was to dramatize a new ethical choice."⁴⁸

As individualistic labor markets eroded family enterprises, a growing number of old people found themselves with no means of support. By the beginning of this century, this problem began to prompt governmental inquiries into the size and composition of the indigent elderly population. One consistent finding that emerged was a negative correlation among the aged between the need for public or charitable support and the number of living children on whom to rely. Thus, as Table II discloses, a 1910 Massachusetts survey comparing the aged in almshouses and benevolent homes with those who had enough resources to exist on "outdoor relief" found that a larger proportion of the latter group had living children. Similarly, as Table III discloses, a 1919 Pennsylvania survey of the dependent and nondependent aged in Pittsburgh, Reading, and Philadelphia, found that old people with more children less frequently lived in almshouses or in private (charitable) homes for the aged. And finally, very similar findings emerged from a 1925 Massachusetts survey⁴⁹ and a 1928 National Civic Federation study of aged persons in the Northeast, from which some data are reproduced in Table IV.

These pre-1930 studies indicate that grown children, by and large, were continuing to support aged parents, as they had in the past, and that the need for public or charitable support of the aged was concentrated among those who lacked this kind of insurance. But now that Social Security has become almost universally available, the number of living children has lost its earlier relationship to elderly indigence. Thus, the Bureau of Public Assistance in the Social Security Administration found in 1953 that nearly three-fourths of

48. U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MODERN AMERICAN FAMILY* 3 (1960).

49. MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON PENSIONS, *REPORT ON OLD AGE PENSIONS* 73, 84, 114, 146, 255 (1925).

TABLE II
MASSACHUSETTS SURVEY, 1910: FAMILY CONNECTION OF INSTITUTIONAL AND NONINSTITUTIONAL AGED POOR

	Totals			Having Adult Children Living at Time of Entrance				Having Near Relatives Living at Time of Entrance				Having Adult Children or Near Relatives Able to Aid at Time of Entrance			
				Yes		Not Stated		Yes		Per Cent		Yes		Per Cent	
				Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated	Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated	Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated
Almshouses	3480	1404			1806	56.2	270	1615	1439	47.1	426	246	2965	92.3	269
Benevolent homes	2598	663			1021	60.6	914	973	543	35.8	1082	189	1247	86.8	1162
Totals	6078	2067			2827	57.8	1184	2588	1982	43.4	1508	435	4212	90.6	1431
	Totals			Having Adult Children Living at Present				Having Near Relatives Living at Present				Having Adult Children or Near Relatives Able to Aid at Present			
				Yes		Not Stated		Yes		Per Cent		Yes		Per Cent	
				Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated	Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated	Yes	No	Per Cent	Not Stated
Outdoor relief, public	3075	1618			1067	39.7	390	1244	920	42.6	911	1033	1194	53.6	848
Outdoor relief, private	444	234			154	39.6	56	239	93	28.1	112	186	137	42.5	121
Totals	3519	1852			1221	39.7	444	1483	1013	40.6	1023	1219	1331	52.2	969

Source: MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON OLD AGE, PENSIONS, ANNUITIES AND INSURANCE, REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, ANNUITIES AND INSURANCE 61 (1910).

TABLE III

PENNSYLVANIA SURVEY, 1919:
PERCENTAGE* OF AGED LIVING IN VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Number of Children Living	Living in Almshouse	Living in Private Home for Aged	Living in Nondependent Status
none	63.5	65.7	10.6
1	13.5	14.6	15.8
2	7.7	8.0	15.9
3	5.6	6.0	15.3
4	4.1	2.9	12.5
5 or more	<u>6.6</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>29.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, REPORT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS 22, 68-69, 94-95 (1919).

* Figures may not add exactly to 100 per cent owing to rounding.

TABLE IV

NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION SURVEY, 1928:
AGED PEOPLE DEPENDENT AND NOT DEPENDENT ON ORGANIZED CHARITY
BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Persons Aided by Organized Charity	Average Number of Children Living
100 Residents of private homes for the aged	57
100 Inmates of public almshouses	62
100 Recipients of public and private outdoor relief	101
Persons Not Aided by Organized Charity	Average Number of Children Living
100 Persons worth \$5,000 or over	212
100 Persons not worth \$5,000, with annual incomes of \$1,000 or over	259
100 Persons not worth \$5,000, with annual incomes, if any, under \$1,000	260

Source: NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION, EXTENT OF OLD AGE DEPENDENCY 118 (1928).

the recipients of Old Age Assistance for the indigent had one or more living children,⁵⁰ which is about the same proportion as obtains for the elderly population at large: among samples of Social Security recipients in 1944 and 1946, about three-fourths of the couples and three-fifths of the individuals had living children.⁵¹ The fact that older people with children are

50. U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE REP. NO. 25, RECIPIENTS OF OLD-AGE ASSISTANCE IN EARLY 1953 pt. 1—State Data, at 48-49 (1955); Kaplan, *Old-Age Assistance: Children's Contributions to Aged Parents*, 20 SOCIAL SECURITY BULL. 3 (June 1957).

51. U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, RESEARCH REP. NO. 34, RESOURCES AFTER RETIREMENT 35 (1970).

now just as likely as those without children to seek public assistance for the indigent suggests that the importance of children as old age insurance has decreased in the past fifty years.

Social Security, for the nine out of ten people over the age of 65 years who receive it, has been replacing both contributions from children and earnings by the pensioners themselves.⁵² Table V discloses that in 1967, Social Security payments, veterans' benefits, and other pensions provided about 40 per cent of all income of Social Security recipients. And Table VI discloses that from 1951 to 1962, Social Security payments grew faster than other kinds of income to the aged. Thus, although the relative importance of their own earnings to the elderly⁵³ is naturally greater in years of strong demand for

TABLE V
SURVEY OF 1967 INCOME OF THE AGED BY SOURCE

Source	Percentage
Earnings	30
Social Security (nontaxable)	26
Other public and private pensions	11
Asset income	25
Veterans' benefits	6
Miscellaneous (including contributions from children and relatives)	2

SOURCE: U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *RESOURCES OF PEOPLE 65 OR OVER* 13 (1970).

TABLE VI
INCREASE IN INCOME OF THE AGED, 1951-62

Group	Increase in Total Income	Increase in Non-OASDHI Income
Married couples	75%	51%
Nonmarried men	62%	39%
Nonmarried retired women	71%	70%
Widows	77%	37%

SOURCE: U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *RESOURCES AFTER RETIREMENT* 11 (1970).

52. In July 1973, out of a 21,329,000 total population of those who were 65 years of age or older, 19,021,000 were receiving OASDI benefits. See U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, DEP'T OF COMMERCE, *CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, SERIES P-24, NO. 519, ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES BY AGE, SEX, AND RACE: APRIL 1, 1960 TO JULY 1, 1973* (1974); *Program Operations*, 36 SOCIAL SECURITY BULL. 1 (Nov. 1973).

53. See U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *RESEARCH REP. NO. 34, RESOURCES AFTER RETIREMENT* 10-12 (1970); U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *THE AGED POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES* 5 (1967).

labor, in general, they are much less self-sufficient than they were before 1930.⁵⁴

If Social Security has partially replaced earnings by the elderly, it has almost entirely replaced contributions from their children. A 1963 Social Security Administration survey of the aged revealed that less than 5 per cent of the older living units received cash contributions from outside relatives, and these contributions totaled less than one per cent of their total income.⁵⁵ By way of contrast, the 1919 Pennsylvania survey found that 24 per cent of the nondependent elderly received aid from their children;⁵⁶ and even among the National Civic Federation survey's highly self-sufficient sample, 15 per cent were fully supported by children and another 18 per cent were receiving partial support.⁵⁷

Some more recent evidence of the decline in contributions from children to parents may be gleaned from income tax returns, as is seen in Table VII. Since the categories of dependents vary from year to year and the 1961 and 1966 data exclude taxpayers who used the short form 1040A, it is not possible to make precise comparisons; but the figures do support the suggestion that the importance of children's cash contributions to aged parents has continued to decline in the 1960's—possibly due to the enactment of Medicare legislation.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF INCOME TAX RETURNS CLAIMING PARENTS OR
GRANDPARENTS AS DEPENDENTS

Year	Type of Dependent	Percentage of All Returns Claiming This Type of Dependent
1961	parent and/or grandparent	5.6
1966	parent and/or grandparent	3.5
1969	parent only	1.7

SOURCE: INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, U.S. DEP'T OF TREASURY, REPORTING CHARACTERISTICS OF TAXPAYERS, TAX YEAR 1969, at 10 (1971); INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, U.S. DEP'T OF TREASURY, REPORTING CHARACTERISTICS OF TAXPAYERS, TAX YEAR 1966, at 8 (1968); INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, U.S. DEP'T OF TREASURY, REPORTING CHARACTERISTICS OF TAXPAYERS, TAX YEAR 1961, at 11 (1963).

54. For example, in 1928, the National Civic Federation found that among nearly 14,000 people over the age of 65 years in eleven northeastern cities, about 60 per cent received no aid whatever from outside sources. See NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION, EXTENT OF OLD AGE DEPENDENCY 118 (1928).

55. See U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, THE AGED POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES 10 (1967).

56. See PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, REPORT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS 108 (1919).

57. See NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION, *supra* note 54, at 63.

Although the available data show a reasonably clear decline in cash contributions from children to aged parents, the evidence on contributions in kind is more ambiguous. Table VIII suggests that married couples receiving Social Security payments were less likely to depend on relatives for room and board in 1962 than such couples were twenty years earlier; but the trend for single men and women is more equivocal. Moreover, the available pre-1930 surveys indicate that about one-third of the elderly population lived with their children⁵⁸—a lower proportion than obtained in 1941-62, which was about 40 per cent, as seen in Table VIII. But on the other hand, when parents live with grown children it is not always obvious who is supporting whom. Thus, Table IX, which is based on a 1957 survey by the Social Security Administration, indicates that it is common for Social Security beneficiaries to make net contributions to their relatives if their income is greater than that of their relatives. So in addition to the uncertainty as to whether old people are living with relatives less often than they used to, there is also some uncertainty as to who benefits more from living together.

TABLE VIII

SAMPLE* PERCENTAGES OF SOCIAL SECURITY RECIPIENTS
LIVING WITH RELATIVES

Category	1941-42	1944	1946	1951	1957	1962
Married couples	42	32	40	31	23	22
Nonmarried men	45	61	60	49	44	44
Nonmarried women	52	55	57	57	49	47

Source: U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, *RESOURCES AFTER RETIREMENT* 32 (1970).

* The 1941 survey covered six metropolitan areas. The 1944 survey covered cities in Ohio with populations of 10,000 to 100,000. The 1946 survey covered Boston. The 1951 and 1957 surveys covered all beneficiaries. The 1962 survey sampled all aged.

Assistance to aged parents in times of illness or other personal emergencies is probably the most important kind of support that grown children still provide. In a 1961 study, a national sample of older people was asked to whom they would turn for help in case of a prolonged illness. Twenty-two per cent named a son, 39 per cent named a daughter, and 22 per cent named other members of the extended family.⁵⁹ Similarly, Enrico Quarantelli con-

58. See MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, ANNUITIES AND INSURANCE, *REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, ANNUITIES AND INSURANCE* 74 (1910); PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON OLD AGE PENSIONS, *supra* note 56, at 96; STATE BOARD OF CONTROL OF WISCONSIN, *OLD AGE ASSISTANCE IN WISCONSIN, 1925-1933*, at 18 (1933).

59. See E. SHANAS, *FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS OF OLDER PEOPLE* 6 (1961).

TABLE IX

SUBSIDIZATION STATUS OF BENEFICIARY UNITS IN JOINT HOUSEHOLD, BY PER CAPITA INCOME OF BENEFICIARY UNIT AND PER CAPITA INCOME OF RELATIVES, 1957 NATIONAL BENEFICIARY SURVEY

Per Capita Income of Beneficiary Unit and Per Capita Income of Relatives	Number of Units With Relatives Present	Total	Percentage Distribution			
			Each Subfamily Unit Paid Pro Rata Costs	Beneficiary Unit Subsidized Relatives	Relatives Subsidized Beneficiary Unit	Unknown
Total	1,408	100	28	27	40	5
Less than \$600	274	100	16	8	74	2
Relatives' income: ¹						
Smaller	35	100	40	34	26	
Larger	189	100	12	3	85	
600-1,199	36	100	36	6	58	
1,200-1,799	40	100	10	5	85	
1,800 or more	113	100	5	1	94	
\$800-899	409	100	28	17	50	5
Relatives' income: ¹						
Smaller	62	100	31	58	6	5
Larger	290	100	28	7	60	5
600-1,199	32	100	31	16	50	3
1,200-1,799	70	100	34	16	44	6
1,800 or more	188	100	24	3	68	5
\$900-1,199	245	100	35	29	32	4
Relatives' income: ¹						
Smaller	58	100	36	59	3	2
Larger	157	100	35	16	44	5
900-1,799	53	100	32	24	42	2
1,800 or more	104	100	36	12	45	7
\$1,200-1,799	248	100	35	37	22	6
Relatives' income: ¹						
Smaller	84	100	40	50	5	5
Larger	122	100	30	27	38	5
1,200-1,799	29	100	45	28	24	3
1,300 or more	93	100	26	27	42	5
\$1,800 or more	232	100	28	56	11	6
Relatives' income: ¹						
Smaller	121	100	21	69	9	2
Larger	71	100	41	34	16	10

Source: U.S. SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, DEP'T OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, & WELFARE, RESOURCES AFTER RETIREMENT 85 (1970).

1. Excludes households in which the relatives were present at the end of the year but not the entire year and households in which income of the relatives was not reported.

cluded from observation of extended families responding to sickness and other crises:⁶⁰

60. Quarantelli, *A Note on the Protective Function of the Family in Disasters*, MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIVING 263, 264 (1960).

Disaster studies lend little support to the general proposition that the protective function has been basically relinquished and that the extended family is of little importance in modern mass societies. The kin group is the preferred, sought, and major source of short and long run help in time of such crises.

Likewise Marvin Sussman: "Illness of an older member of the kin group results in almost instantaneous response from well members. As a rule, children of the ill member respond most vigorously, and one child assumes or is delegated the role of 'responsible member.'"⁶¹ These studies were conducted before enactment of Medicare legislation, however, and it seems likely that the availability of this public assistance will relieve many children of much of the felt responsibility for providing this kind of support to aged parents.

To summarize, in the twentieth century, there seems to have been a significant reduction in financial contributions by grown children to aged parents. In effect, the members of the working generation now support the members of the older generation indirectly through Social Security, rather than by each child taking direct financial responsibility for his own parents. Moreover, although some parents still share housing with grown children, there may rather be net transfers within such households from the older generation to the younger. And finally, although grown children have until quite recently been a major source of assistance to aged parents in times of illness, this too may be changed by Medicare. In short, though parents may still receive some support in kind from their grown children, they no longer receive much in cash.

IV

FERTILITY PAST AND FUTURE

The preceding parts have described three important historical changes in the economic structure of American families. Children's productive contributions to their families before they leave home and their financial contributions afterwards have both dwindled in importance, while the opportunity cost of parents' time in child rearing has grown. These changes have drastically increased the net economic cost of children to their parents, with a consequent effect on fertility and family size that will likely continue into the future.

Every measure of fertility in this country signaled a quite steady decline from the beginning of recorded statistics until World War II. Women born between 1835 and 1850 bore an average of more than 5.3 children, the modal number being eight, and more than 14 per cent of them had ten or more,

61. Sussman, *Relationships of Adult Children With Their Parents in the United States*, in *SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE FAMILY: GENERATIONAL RELATIONS* 84 (E. Shanas & G. Streib eds. 1965).

while only 8 per cent had never borne a child.⁶² By way of comparison, the cohort of women born two generations later, between 1900 and 1915, bore an average of fewer than 2.5 children, and only 1.5 per cent of them had ten or more, while more than 18 per cent had never borne a child.⁶³ Correspondingly, the gross birth rate among white women fell from more than 50 per thousand before 1840 to less than 25 per thousand after 1920.⁶⁴ And finally, the number of living children younger than five years of age, per white woman aged 20 to 44 years, declined from more than 1.2 before 1830 to less than 0.6 after 1920.⁶⁵ Thus, completed fertility, gross birth rate, and the ratio of children under five years of age to women of childbearing age all fell by more than half between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries.

How much of this fall in fertility is attributable to changes in the economic structure of families is debatable. To be sure, urbanization and industrialization played some role. Assuming that farm families tend to have more children,⁶⁶ the country's growing urban character must have contributed to the fall in the birth rate. But on the other hand, industrialization also increased per capita income, and this might have facilitated the rearing of large families, even though the net economic cost of a child was rising. Accordingly, the question may well be asked, why did rising income not increase the desire for children as fast as the changes wrought by industrialization raised their economic cost to their parents?

If each additional child confers less emotional satisfaction as families grow in size, then parents will have fewer children as the cost of a child increases. Moreover, although a child may once have paid its own way more or less, it has increasingly become an economic liability rather than an asset to its parents. (Indeed, the cost of an additional child to some mothers might even increase with the number of children—because while taking one or two years off to have a single child might not do irreparable harm to her career, staying at home for three or four years to raise two or three children might make it difficult for her ever to return.) So it would appear that despite the possible emotional satisfaction that parents may have perceived in having children, any positive effect of industrialization and rising income on the demand for children must have been more than counterbalanced by the rise in their economic cost—with the result that average family size was reduced by half.

Nor does the postwar baby boom—that sudden rapid rise in fertility after more than a century of continuous decline—contradict this historical theory.

62. U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, DEP'T OF COMMERCE, SERIES B69-75, HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES 24 (1960).

63. *Id.*

64. *Id.* at 23 (Series B19-30).

65. *Id.* at 24 (Series B37-68).

66. See Easterlin, *Does Human Fertility Adjust to the Environment?*, 61 AM. ECON. REV. 399-407 (1971). See also Gardner, *Economics of the Size of North Carolina Rural Families*, 8 J. POL. ECON. S99-S122 (no. 2, pt. II, 1973).

Richard Easterlin has argued that the postwar baby boom resulted from a strong expansion of demand for labor at a time when the children born in the infertile 1930's were entering the labor force.⁶⁷ The resulting labor shortage could not be met by immigration, which had been curtailed in the mid-1920's, so the children of the 1930's prospered wildly in the 1940's and 1950's, and as they prospered, they married young and raised large families. Older couples, too, who had deferred marriage and children from 1930 to 1945, made up for lost time after the war. In essence, then, this explanation views the postwar baby boom as a response to prosperity.⁶⁸ But why should rising prosperity have stimulated a baby boom after 1945, when increasing prosperity from 1830 to 1930 failed to prevent a continuous decline in fertility? Easterlin's answer is that previous periods of economic prosperity had, indeed, brought increases in population—but by migration, not natural increase.⁶⁹

Although absence of immigration during a period of prosperity may help to explain the postwar baby boom, there remains the possibility that the demand for children after World War II also increased for noneconomic reasons. Alan Sweezy has suggested that the postwar babies were not simply a response to prosperity, but also represented a response to "concern about failure of the better-educated, presumably more intelligent, members of society to reproduce themselves,"⁷⁰ reflected in the fact that between 1940 and 1960, completed fertility for women aged 35 to 39 years increased disproportionately among better-educated women.⁷¹ This does seem to indicate that the postwar baby boom was due not only to rising income, but also to a shift in attitudes and lifestyles, which led people to take time away from earning money in order to raise children.

If decisions about having children now depend on attitudes and lifestyles, it will be difficult to predict the course of fertility in the future. The echo effects of the baby boom seem likely to depress birth rates in the 1970's—if the horde of young people entering the labor force have difficulty finding job security, they may postpone having families.⁷² Economic prosperity may now be a necessary but not a sufficient cause for a rise in fertility—people will not have children if they cannot afford them, but they may not have children even if they can afford them. Except for migrant workers and tenant farmers, few parents any longer receive economic benefits from children, so for the large majority, the decision to have children now rather de-

67. See R. EASTERLIN, *POPULATION, LABOR FORCE, AND LONG SWINGS IN ECONOMIC GROWTH* 63-65 (1968).

68. *Id.* at 65.

69. *Id.* at 60-63.

70. Sweezy, *The Economic Exploration of Fertility Changes in the United States*, 25 *POPULATION STUDIES* 255, 263 (1971).

71. *Id.* at 260.

72. See R. EASTERLIN, *supra* note 67, at 71.

pendes on the intangible satisfactions children may bring. And for some members of the self-conscious postwar generation, the decision to have children appears even to have become a matter of social consciousness as well as personal desires.⁷³ In Norman B. Ryder's words, "[s]hould the means become available to enable couples to achieve their reproductive goals with considerable precision, then the principal source of future fertility variations will be changes in those goals."⁷⁴

V

REINTEGRATION OF WORK AND FAMILY?

The birth rate has become difficult to predict because the family has become detached from its historic economic moorings. Since children have lost their economic value to parents, the reasons for having children have become intangible and unclear. The uncertainty about the birth rate is a sign that children's place in our society has become problematic. Has the separation of work from home, the exclusion of children from the paid labor force, and the socialization of old-age insurance left children useless, compared to the past? If so, what are the consequences for children and adults? This final part evaluates the historical changes documented above, suggesting how they may have altered the experience of children and adults and how the future might preserve the advantages and remedy the disadvantages resulting from these changes.

The chief advantage of separating work from home has been to facilitate the mobilization of capital and labor for productive efficiency, technical change, and economic growth. It is evidently more efficient for industrial enterprises to hire workers individually. During the early stages of industrialization, of course, some families did continue to work together in cottage industries or as groups of laborers in factories. Also, other transitional institutions of the early industrial period—such as the "spinning schools" where children lived, worked, and learned to read—were quasi-familial, in that they provided juvenile workers with a certain amount of care. And even today, some families still work together in agriculture and small business. But these are anachronisms in modern labor markets.

Still another advantage of separating work from family has been the resultant greater independence of children from parents. In the nineteenth century, many children evidently welcomed the chance to escape the confines of the family, to go out to seek their own fortunes rather than work under

73. See generally M. GERZON, *A CHILDHOOD FOR EVERY CHILD—THE POLITICS OF PARENTHOOD* (1973).

74. Ryder, *The Family in Developed Countries*, 231 *SCIENTIFIC AM.* 122, 132 (1974).

oppressive constraints whose harshness could be validated by a divine authority that presumably was familiar to generations of Bible-reading parents:⁷⁵

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them, then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, "This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones.

Indeed, in documenting an atrocious history of infanticide, abandonment, beatings, terror, and sexual abuse of children by parents and other adults that extended into the nineteenth century, Lloyd DeMause has written that "[t]he history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken."⁷⁶

But increased economic efficiency and freedom for children have not been achieved without cost. What children have lost in the process is the chance to be economically useful. And through a prolonged period of nearly complete economic dependency, they may grow to doubt their own worth. Furthermore, since parents no longer have as direct an economic stake in their children, they no longer have as strong an incentive to ensure that their children learn some kind of useful work. Witness the frustration of graduates from high school, and even college, who cannot find jobs, which suggests that many children may be growing to adulthood without learning any practical skills. This does more than indicate the possible need for teaching practical skills in school—rather it calls into question the whole idea of childhood as a period of involuntary dependency.

Prime-age males, in protecting women and children against the rigors of the labor market, have reserved for themselves the most important positions in the world of industrial work. Preindustrial fathers were owners and managers of the family enterprise. Separation of work from home threatened this dominant role, however, because women and children could similarly earn comparable wages. Men organized in labor unions, therefore, prevailed upon men in legislatures to protect the adult male's economic authority by forbidding child labor, requiring children to stay in school, and imposing minimum wages to ensure that a working father could feed his dependents. Like women and old people, children have been restricted to marginal or menial jobs. Their major role has been at home, where they have been expected to provide after-work affection and emotional support for the breadwinner, who has had to hold a job that was seldom expected to be a satisfying activity in itself—only that it suffice to support a family.

75. Deuteronomy 12:18, 2 THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE 462 (1953).

76. DeMause, *The Evolution of Childhood*, 1 HIST. CHILDHOOD Q. 503 (1974).

But neither the role of self-sacrificing adult nor the role of self-indulgent child really allows for a whole person. Adult work roles seldom include room for the fanciful, growing, and feeling parts of people; and while dependent children do have opportunities to play, experiment, and make mistakes, they lack power, social standing, and responsibility. The strains of these limited roles are quite evident in the persistent restlessness of young people in school,⁷⁷ in the nagging sense among many adults that the quality of working life should somehow be better than it is,⁷⁸ and in the women's movement, which reflects a desire to break out of an economically dependent role. If the women's movement realizes its objectives, there will soon be little difference between male and female rates of participation in the paid labor force, and all adults, regardless of sex, will be productive—only children will remain dependent.

But does this go far enough? Why accept the unnatural dichotomy between the role of productive but self-denying adult and the role of self-indulgent but dependent child, which did not seem necessary before a century of industrialization? Without wishing to reverse history, it would be useful to consider new kinds of institutions that could function in an industrial society without dichotomizing adults and children. For example, would it be feasible to create some kind of hybrid between a school and an economic enterprise in which people of various ages could work and learn together? Some schools in this country and abroad have at various times included productive work in the curriculum, as a kind of vocational education. Could the idea be extended—could a school be made sufficiently viable as a business to provide jobs both for children and for adults other than teachers? These and other alternative possibilities should be explored in efforts to devise settings in which children could learn to work in a new way.

77. See U.S. PRESIDENT'S PANEL ON YOUTH, *YOUTH: TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD* (1973).

78. See SENATE COMM. ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE, 93D CONG., 1ST SESS., *WORK IN AMERICA* (Comm. Print 1973). See generally S. TERKEL, *WORKING*